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MARKETING IN BLOGS

– Case Oceanhorn



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MARKETING IN BLOGS -CASE OCEANHORN

The importance of social media in marketing is increasing and blogs bring new opportunities for companies. A blog can be defined as a website that is frequently updated and is contained of posts that are displayed in a reverse chronological order and tend to contain personal opinions as well as facts.

In this thesis the ways of how small companies can benefit from blog marketing are studied. This thesis focuses on a case Oceanhorn, a game from a Finnish game company Cornfox & Brothers Ltd, and the ways blog has been used as a marketing tool during the development process of the game.

The theoretical part discusses the history of blogs and the present situation of the popularity of blogs. In the theoretical part the basics of blog marketing and the benefits that using a blog can bring to a company are also studied. The AIDA-model (consists of Attention, Interest, Desire and Action) and the using of the model is studied in the theoretical part of the thesis.

Qualitative method was chosen as the primary source of information in this thesis as interview, statistical analysis of the control panel of the blog and content analysis of the comments of the blog were suitable for the purposes of this thesis. The aim of marketing is to send a message to the customer. The ideal situation is when the message gains attention, holds interest, arouses desire, and causes action. This AIDA-model is used to evaluate the effectiveness of blog marketing.

The results of this thesis show how blog has increased the awareness and visibility of the game Oceanhorn. The content analysis of the comments of the blog shows that the anticipation towards the game was high and also the fact that the readers would hope that the blog would have been updated more often. The statistical analysis of the control panel show that the readers of the blog come from the biggest target countries of the game and more than half of the readers use the platforms needed to play the game. The blog also creates direct and instant interaction between the readers and the writer. This interaction can be highly important for small companies.

KEYWORDS:

Blog, corporative blog, blog marketing, Oceanhorn

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MARKKINOINTI BLOGEISSA -CASE OCEANHORN

Sosiaalisen median tärkeys markkinoinnissa lisääntyy ja blogit tuovat uusia mahdollisuuksia yrityksille. Blogi voidaan määritellä Internet-sivuksi jota päivitetään säännöllisesti ja joka koostuu postauksista. Nämä postaukset on järjestely niin, että uusin postaus löytyy ensimmäisenä blogista. Postaukset sisältävät henkilökohtaisia mielipiteitä sekä faktoja.

Tämä opinnäytetyö tutkii tapoja joilla pienet yritykset voivat hyötyä blogimarkkinoinnista. Opinnäytetyö keskittyy case-tutkimuksena Oceanhorniin, suomalaisen pelifirma Cornfox & Brothers Ltd:n peliin, ja tapoihin joilla blogia on käytetty markkinointivälineenä pelin kehitysprosessin ajan.

Teoreettinen osuus opinnäytetyöstä keskittyy blogien historiaan ja blogien suosion nykytilanteeseen. Myös blogimarkkinoinnin perusteet ja hyödyt joita yritys saa käyttäessään blogia markkinointivälineenä käydään läpi. Markkinoinnin tavoitteena on tehostaa tuotteiden käyttöä, välittää viestejä ja tietoa asiakkaille. Optimitilanteessa markkinointi herättää huomion, pitää yllä kiinnostuksen, herättää halun ja saa aikaa toiminnan. Työssä kuvataan tätä markkinoinnin ns. AIDA-mallia (Attention, Interest, Desire ja Action); ja se on yksi keino, jolla blogimarkkinoinnin tehokkuutta työssä arvioidaan.

Laadullinen menetelmä valittiin tämän opinnäytetyön ensisijaiseksi tutkimusmenetelmäksi. Haastattelu, blogin ohjauspaneelin tilastollinen analysointi sekä blogin kommenttien sisällönanalyysi sopivat tämän opinnäytetyön tavoitteisiin. Tämän opinnäytetyön tulokset osoittavat, kuinka blogi on lisännyt Oceanhorn-pelin näkyvyyttä ja lukijoiden tietoisuutta pelistä. Blogin kommenttien sisällönanalyysi osoittaa että pelin odotus oli suuri ja lukijat toivoivat säännöllisempiä postauksia. Ohjauspaneelin tilastollinen analysointi osoitti, että blogin lukijat tulivat pelin suurimmista kohdemaista sekä yli puolet lukijoista käyttää pelin pelaamiseen vaadittavaa alustaa. Blogin avulla kirjoittaja pystyy käymään suoraa keskustelua lukijoiden kanssa ja tämä vuorovaikutus on erittäin hyödyllinen pienelle yritykselle.

ASIASANAT:

Blogi, yritysblogi, blogimarkkinointi, Oceanhorn

CONTENT

1 INTRODUCTION	6
1.1 Objectives of the thesis	6
1.2 Introduction of Cornfox & Brothers Ltd	7
1.3 Research questions	8
1.4 The structure of the thesis	8
2 WHY BLOG MARKETING?	10
2.1 What is a blog?	10
2.2 Why companies should use blogs as a marketing tool	11
3 METHODOLOGY	17
3.1 Research methods and implementation	17
3.2 Case study of Cornfox & Brothers' new game Oceanhorn	19
4 BLOG MARKETING IN CASE OCEANHORN	21
4.1 Case company	21
4.2 Oceanhorn: Monster of the Uncharted Seas	22
4.3 How the blog has been used as a marketing tool	23
4.3.1 Why a blog?	23
4.3.2 Description of the blog	24
4.3.3 The audience of the blog	27
4.4 Analysis of the blog	30
4.4.1 The themes arisen in the discussion	30
4.4.2 Interaction	33
4.4.3 AIDA-model and the blog	35
5 CONCLUSIONS	40
5.1 Benefits of blog marketing for small businesses	40
5.2 Conclusions to case Oceanhorn	41
5.3 Suggestions for future	42
5.4 Credibility of the research findings	43
5.5 Suggestions for further research	44
REFERENCES	45

APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Interview	49
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FIGURES

Figure 1 Number of blogs tracked by NM Incite (NM Incite, 2012)	11
Figure 2 Objectives of AIDA-model (Kotler, 2002, 481)	15
Figure 3 Cornfox & Brothers Ltd's logo (Cornfox & Brothers Ltd., 2013)	21
Figure 4 Gameplay screenshot from Oceanhorn	22
Figure 5 The game Oceanhorn's logo	23
Figure 6 The structure of the blog	24
Figure 7 Structure of a post	25
Figure 8 Pageviews by countries 2.11.2013	28
Figure 9 Pageviews by operating system 2.11.2013	29
Figure 10 Pageviews by browser 2.11.2013	30
Figure 11 Anticipation 7.11.2013	31
Figure 12 More Updates 7.11.2013	33
Figure 13 Referring sites 2.11.2013	36
Figure 14 Praises 7.11.2013	37
Figure 15 Reader statistics 27.10–25.11.2013	38

TABLES

Table 1 Pageveiw statistics as of 2.11.2013	35
Table 2 Video views as of 1.12.2013	36

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Objectives of the thesis

As the importance of social media increases in marketing, blogs bring new marketing opportunities for companies. Blogs can be defined as online diaries that are frequently updated to maintain the interest of the readers (McBride & Cason 2006, 15).

Blogs organize their content into short “posts” or articles, which are displayed in a reverse chronological order and tend to contain personal opinions as well as facts. Adding a new post is simple, write it and publish it, just as simple as sending an e-mail. (Holtz, Demopoulos, 2006, 20.) Blogs can be a useful tool in marketing because it reaches readers and possible customers from different cities, countries and continents, when the only thing needed to connect with them is a working internet connection.

The aspect in this thesis towards blog marketing is the corporative way, when an employee of the company is writing a blog as a marketing tool. The basics of blog marketing and the benefits that blog marketing can bring to a small company are studied in this thesis.

In this thesis I analyze as a case study research how Cornfox & Brothers Ltd, a small Finnish game company is using a blog as a marketing tool. Cornfox & Brothers Ltd released a new game called Oceanhorn in 14.11.2013 and co-founder and Creative Director Heikki Repo has been writing a blog about the development of the game through the whole process.

This blog has been one of the ways Cornfox & Brothers Ltd has been marketing and informing their customers about their upcoming game. In this thesis the interaction between the readers and the writer and the content of the discussion arisen from the posts are studied.

In this thesis I analyze the contents of the discussions arisen from the blog posts. The topics and themes that are popular in the discussion are studied in the fourth section of the thesis. The AIDA-model is used to evaluate the effectiveness of blog marketing.

1.2 Introduction of Cornfox & Brothers Ltd

Cornfox & Borthers Ltd is a Finnish game designing and game development company formed by three veteran game developers. They value quality and originality in their work and want to provide memorable experiences for gaming audiences. Their new game Oceanhorn: Monster of the Uncharted Seas was released 14.11.2013.

The game is designed for iOS platform, and it is available for devices such as iPhone and iPad (the game is available at <https://itunes.apple.com/app/id708196645?mt=8>). According to Heikki Repo, the game is a classic console-style action-RPG-adventure game.

In their blog (<http://oceanhorn.blogspot.fi>), Cornfox & Brothers Ltd gives sneak-a-peeks of the development of Oceanhorn for the readers and also informs them about other news related to the new game. They have also linked multiple game play videos from YouTube to their blog in order to attract the followers.

1.3 Research questions

In this thesis the aim is to try to answer the following research questions:

1. What is blog marketing?
2. How can a small business benefit from blog marketing?
3. How does blog marketing increase the awareness and visibility of Corn-fox & Brothers' new game Oceanhorn?

In order to answer this main research question I interview the writer of the blog and analyze the content of the blog. Personally I find new and innovative ways of marketing interesting and that is the main reason I wanted to study this topic. As blog marketing is relatively new subject and differs a lot compared to the traditional marketing ways, I chose the topic.

1.4 The structure of the thesis

In the second segment of the thesis the basics of blog marketing and the benefits it brings to a company are studied. What blog marketing is, how it can positively affect a company and why companies should use it as a marketing tool; these questions are answered in the first segment. The AIDA-model and the using of this model is also studied

The third segment of the thesis covers the methodology part. The research methods used are explained and the methods in case Oceanhorn are studied.

In the fourth segment the case Oceanhorn is studied. The structure of the blog is studied and the reasons why a blog was chosen as marketing too explained. I go through the concrete information about the visibility the blog has gained, such as the amount of readers in the posts and the geographical distribution of the readers. The dialogue the blog has created between the readers and the blogger is studied and the contents of the discussion arisen are analyzed by

using a content analysis. The effectiveness of the blog marketing in case Oceanhorn is studied by using the AIDA-model.

In the fifth segment the conclusions of the thesis are studied. The research questions are answered. The themes arisen from the discussion about the blog posts are listed and the analysis of the contents done. The evaluation of the results of using the AIDA-model is studied. In the conclusions part the recommendations for the future is also listed.

2 WHY BLOG MARKETING?

2.1 What is a blog?

Even though web diaries have been written almost since the start of World Wide Web, the term blog was invented in 1997 by John Barger. He started using the name weblog, a combination of words web and log, about his websites and with one press of space key the name was transferred to we blog. The first web service for blogs, Blogger, was published in 1997. (Kilpi 2006, 11-12.)

The center of the Finnish blogosphere is called Blogilista (www.blogilista.fi), where thousands of Finnish blogs are listed. Blogilista makes it easier for the reader to follow the blogs they find interesting and to find new blogs in certain subject to follow. This site is only the Finnish version of many more. Examples of the foreign sites that makes following and finding interesting blogs easier are Technorati (www.technorati.com), Feedster (www.feedster.com) and Blogdigger (www.blogdigger.com). (Kilpi 2006, 18-19.)

The community built of all of the blogs existing is called blogosphere. There are two factors that connect blogs to others in the blogosphere; links and comments. Comments are the main factor that makes blogs a media that is democratic and concerted. The opportunity to comment the blog posts makes blogging a highly interactive tool. With links the bloggers can show what are the reference groups they belong to and to show their respect towards other bloggers. (Kilpi 2006, 17-18.)

Blogs in organizations can be used in many different ways. It can be a tool for communication, product development tool, content marketing resource and customer service tool, and all these with small expenses (Kortesuo & Kurvinen, 2011, 171).

The exact amount of blogs existing is hard to estimate, as thousands of new blogs are published every day and old blogs are discontinued or are not frequently updated anymore. The numbers available still speak for themselves;

NM Incite was able to track over 181 million blogs around the world in the end of 2011. (Figure 1.) The popularity of blogs is indisputable as the amount of blogs in 2006 was 36 million. (NM Incite, 2012.)

Number of Blogs Tracked by NM Incite

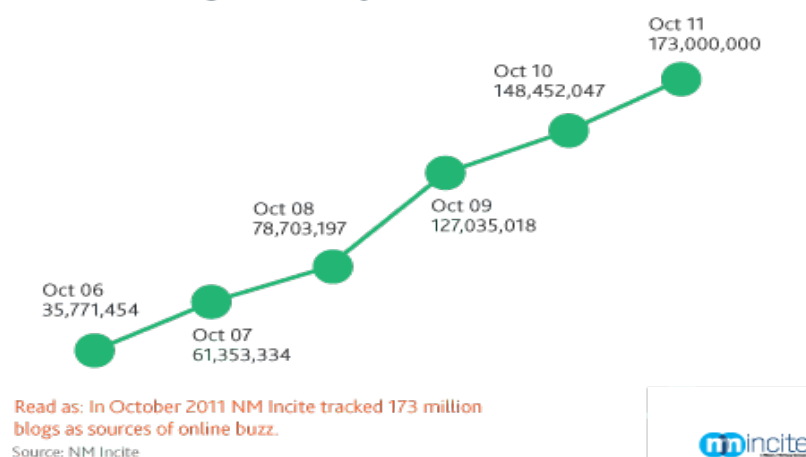


Figure 1 Number of blogs tracked by NM Incite (NM Incite, 2012)

The amount of corporate blogs has also increased during the last years. Even though corporate blogging is not yet recognized everywhere as a good marketing tool, there are few examples of companies that have a corporate blog. From big global companies, Microsoft is a good example of a company that has realized the importance of blogs. In Finland, Nokia was the only big company that had a public blog in 2008. (Alasilta, 2009, 86.) In 2013, 12, 6% of the top 500 companies in Finland had a corporate blog (Auramo, 2013).

2.2 Why companies should use blogs as a marketing tool

As Kotler and Armstrong (2005, 5) define, marketing can be called the process by which companies create value for its customers and try to build strong customer relationships in order to capture value from its customers in return. Using a blog as a marketing tool is interesting and different, because it does not necessarily create direct action but generates awareness of the product.

The aim of marketing is to send a message to the customer. The ideal situation is when the message gains *attention*, holds *interest*, arouses *desire*, and causes *action* (a framework called the AIDA-model). (Kotler, 2002, 569.)

As blogs are global channels that can reach millions of readers, the competitive advantages that companies can get by having a corporate blog are numerous. First of all, having a blog is easy and fast. Anyone can write a blog and can update it as often as they want. It is a cheap marketing tool and the posts are instantly available everywhere in the world. With search engines such as Blogilista, blogs in a certain topic are easy to find. Also if the blog is frequently updated, it is easier for people to find the blog as search engines rank websites through the amount of new data updated. (Scoble & Israel, 2006, 44-55.)

A blog humanizes companies by giving it a human face. People feel more comfortable buying products from a company when they build bonding with the customers by putting a human face in their websites. Blogs do this and more, when the readers can find pictures, videos and texts in a blog. (Thomas, 2011, 73.) For example Microsoft uses lots of corporate blogs written by several employees and through those blogs they aim to humanize their corporate image and also make it easier for the different working units to co-operate. They feel that blogging is an important competitive advantage compared to companies such as Apple Computers, where blogging is forbidden. (Scoble & Israel, 2006, 36.)

As Tara Hunt, a blogger, author, social media expert, CEO and co-founder of Buyosphere says: "Blogging is unique because it gives you the chance to really make a human connection with your customers. It also allows you to communicate in ways that aren't possible on most social media platforms and a blog gives you the opportunity to give people a 'behind the scenes' at a business." (Kosir, 2011).

As blogosphere connects millions of people all over the world, it is a huge public machine where people are talking about your company and your competitors, your hobbies and other interests (Kilpi, 2006, 25). This discussion is linked to others interested in the same topics and as it is possible to link blogs to others,

the amount of visibility for one post can be tremendous (Scoble & Israel, 2006, 45). This visibility is one of the most important reasons companies' should have a blog.

Blogs can be a helpful tool to make the company's image better. As a reputation management tool, in a blog, the writer can correct false accusations. When the criticism is answered immediately, the company's image can be saved. A blog can also be a good way to show the customers of the commitment to customer service with rapid answers. (Thomas, 2011, 73-74.) Blog also makes a dialogue between the customer and the company possible. When customers can comment to the company's blog, the interaction between the reader and the writer is more active. According to Bill Gates, blogging makes communication easy, and it doesn't have the same weaknesses that e-mails and websites have and the two-way conversation makes the customers, the employees and the suppliers satisfied (Scoble & Israel, 2006, 28).

In a blog, the conversation can flow and it can be a good thing when the conversation is not controlled too much. Through the comments, the conversation can show the blogger what the customers, or the potential customers, value, like or dislike, etc. (Evans, 2008, 211.)

Communication is the key to happy customer relationship. When the company interacts with the customers in some way, the more informed the customers are and this leads to higher customer satisfaction. (Reid, 2010, 151) For small businesses the importance of proper communication and interaction with the customers is vital, as losing any new or old customers is not desirable. In a blog, it is easier for the customers and the writer to communicate and interact. In a blog it is possible to interact immediately and more effectively than in a normal website. In a normal company website, the threshold for commenting through a form may be higher than in a blog, where the customer can directly comment to a post and get answers faster.

When the readers are satisfied with the quality and content of the information they find in a blog, their behavioral loyalty increases. The information available

and the sharing of that information reflect on the blogs service value. By gaining useful information from a blog, the readers may achieve their goals and gain new knowledge and this increases the probability they will visit the blog again. Once the readers recognize the blogs value, they start to build a relationship with the blogger and other participants and through that creating more active interaction. (Hsu et al. 2013)

In a corporative blog the customers have the opportunity to give direct feedback to the organization; for example about the products, the services or other matters in interest. This makes it easy for the organization to react on the criticism and be involved in the discussion. After all, the most productive feedback can be the comments and a blog is not a blog without them.

In a blog, the writer can publish general information about the industry or for example news, especially if the company in question has been involved in the news. If the industry in question has gained publicity in the press, it is certain that the topic will be searched in the web more than usually. In this situation, a blog is a good way to get visibility because blogs can be quickly found in Google's search results pages. (Korpi, 2010, 32.)

AIDA-model is the classic model that aims to outline the promotional goals and achieving the final goal; the purchase of goods or services by the target market (Ferrel & Hartline, 2005, 285).

AIDA stands for Attention, Interest, Desire and Action:

- **Attention** One major goal of marketing for any company is to attract the potential customer's attention.
- **Interest** A company tries to generate the potential customer's interest towards its products or services. This happens by showcasing features, benefits and uses of its products or services.
- **Desire** In order to convince the potential customers to purchase its products or services, the company must prove their superiority compared to the competitors and its ability to satisfy the customer's needs better than the competitors.

- **Action** The action aims to push the potential customers towards the purchase of the product or service.

The affects of the AIDA-model can be divided into three stages; the cognitive stage, affective stage and behavior stage as can be seen from Figure 2 Objectives of AIDA-model (Kotler, 2002, 481).

Stages	AIDA-model
Cognitive stage	Attention ↓
Affective stage	Interest ↓ Desire
Behavior stage	↓ Action

Figure 2 Objectives of AIDA-model (Kotler, 2002, 481).

In the cognitive stage, the marketing aims to create awareness of the products or services to the potential customers. Attention is included in the cognitive stage. The affective stage aims to create, maintain and strengthen positive attitudes towards the company's products or services in the mind of the potential customers. In the affective stage, the aim is to create emotional actions. Interest and Desire phases of AIDA are included in the affective stage because they both aim on influencing the potential customers' opinions about the company's products or services. The behavior stage seeks to finish the customer buying process. Action phase of AIDA aims on to the purchase of the service or a product. (The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Management, 2006, 5, 10, 11)

The AIDA-model is an effective way to describe the effects of blog marketing. A blog draws the reader's attention and increases the awareness about the prod-

uct. A blog also helps to maintain the reader's interest towards the product as it can give details about the development of the product and give other new information that sustains the reader's interest. In a blog, it is easy to convince the reader why the product would satisfy their needs and this way convinces the possible customers that they desire and want the product. As the reader's and the possible customers attention is achieved, the interest is aroused and the desire for the product is created, the blog may be the reason the customer takes action and purchases the product.

The aim of marketing is to create awareness of a company and its products or services to the public. This transaction does not need to be expensive undertaking, but it needs to be a constant effort. (Reid, 2010, 56)

For small companies, traditional marketing tools may be out of reach as they cost much and small companies usually have limited financial resources to put to marketing. This is where online marketing comes into the picture. This includes the company's website, marketing your website, using e-mails, using social media, blogging, the opportunities are various (Gordon, 2006, 2, 17, 118). Blog is a good opportunity for small companies as it is a cheap marketing tool. One of the best ways of marketing is to show your potential customers examples of your work and show what you and your company is all about (Reid, 2010, 15). In a blog, this way of marketing is possible and easy to be done.

A blog is a good marketing tool for small companies as it is dynamic and is easy to modify. A blog is a media where it is possible to react fast compared to the traditional channels. In a blog, you can modify your blog posts quickly if needed, and this is not possible in for example TV-commercials.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research methods and implementation

The aim of researches is to increase knowledge by finding something out in a systematic way. There are numerous of techniques and methodologies to gather and analyze data; for example case studies, surveys and observations. All of the techniques and methods for collecting data can be divided into two categories: quantitative and qualitative methods. (Saunders et al, 2000, 2, 5, 92).

Quantitative data is based on numbers. The results of the collection are in numerical and standardized data. The analysis is implemented through diagrams and statistics. Qualitative data can be defined as data that is based on meanings expressed through words. The collection results in data that is not standardized and requires classification into categories. The analysis is implemented by using conceptualization. (Saunders et al, 2000, 381).

In a qualitative research the aim is to answer the questions why, how and what kind of. The sample is carefully chosen and compact. In a qualitative research the small amount of cases are focused on and those cases are analyzed as precisely as possible. In a qualitative research, the aim is not to make a statistical generalization. Qualitative research is a good option for developing action and for the search of options. (Heikkilä 1998, 16-17).

In a qualitative research, the materials are often gathered through open, conversation-like interviews, interviews that focus on certain themes or group conversations. The interaction between the interviewee and the interviewer is typical. The materials of qualitative research are not always unambiguous and the researcher does interpretations during the material collection and the analyzing. (Heikkilä, 1998, 16-17)

Case study research can be defined as a development of the detailed, intensive knowledge about a single case or multiple cases (Robson, 1993, 40). It usually

aims to answer the questions how and why. In a case study, the data collection methods can be various. (Saunders et al, 2000, 94).

In a content analysis the material is studied, looking for the similarities and differences and then summarized. Content analysis is text analysis in which texts and materials transformed to texts are studied. The texts studied can be almost anything; books, journals, interviews, speeches and discussions. The aim of content analysis is to make a summarized description about the material studied. It connects the results to a larger context and other studies made of the subject. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2002, 105)

According to Anttila (1998) it is typical for content analysis to classify the data and process it statistically, if the aim is to describe the data quantitatively. Through an analysis the aim is to create content categories either by words or in other form that can be further processed.

The rating frame of a content analysis is a list of all of the content categories that include smaller sections. The basis of the rating frame can be the opportunities that the material offers, former researches and the results of these researches, references from the specialists, former theories, the connections and starting points indicated in the frame of references and the combinations of these.

The material analyzed is divided into expedient segments, observation units, which can be in written documents for example headings, editorials or a whole book. A rating unit means the part of the observation unit that is in the rating recorded to the content category to which it is referred to. When rating the units, the so called encodings are used. This means that the rating units are given a marking letter, number etc.

If the content analysis is made using the qualitative methods, the rating units are given numerical value depending on how they are shown in the materials. This way, the materials can be turned into statistics. The most common statistical methods used in content analysis are the averages of the content categories

and calculations of other marking numbers, analysis of the variance, the calculation of correlation coefficient, factor analysis etc.

In order to succeed in making of content analysis the analysis must be objective. The text is encoded to categories that answer the research questions. The content analysis must be systematical action. This means that materials that do not support the hypotheses cannot be left out of the analysis. The content analysis must rely on theory and it must have theoretical relevance. The aim is to be more than analyzing the content; the results should be connected to the definition of the phenomenon or the persons behind it or the cultural, economical, social or other factors. (Anttila, 1998).

3.2 Case study of Cornfox & Brothers' new game Oceanhorn

In this thesis the aim is to analyze the marketing of Cornfox & Brothers' new game Oceanhorn and specifically the use of a blog as a marketing tool. The research is qualitative and is made by using a case study about the blog marketing of Cornfox & Brothers. This case is studied by using interview, a content analysis of the blog and by using the AIDA-model to evaluate the effectiveness of the blog marketing.

As the first research question, what is blog marketing is answered in the theoretical part of this thesis the case study focuses on answering the following questions:

1. How can a small business benefit from blog marketing?
2. How does blog marketing increase the awareness and visibility of Cornfox & Brothers' new game Oceanhorn?

In this research, qualitative research is chosen to be the primary source of data, as it fits better to the purposes of the thesis. The qualitative data is collected through an interview, content analysis of the blog and observations. Quantita-

tive methods are also used through diagrams and figures. These are made for example about the numbers of readers the blog has.

In this research, the interview is done face-to-face and is in semi-structured format in order to avoid observer bias. The questions in the interview are open questions and can be found in the Appendix 1.

In this research a content analysis is made. The content analysis studies the themes that are arisen in the comments of the blog in order to understand the discussion that the blog posts have created. The frequencies of the appearances of the chosen keywords in the comments are calculated by using the search function of the word processing program Microsoft Office Word. The aim in the content analysis is to find certain themes of discussion from the comments of the blog.

By analyzing the discussion, it is possible to recognize the effects that the blog has had on the readers' buying behavior and how the AIDA-model works when a blog is used as a marketing tool. The analysis also studies the interaction between the writer and the readers.

When a case study is made, it is important to realize that one case cannot be used to make generalizations. The aim of studying a case is to increase the understanding of the phenomenon, not to make generalizations. The results of the research and the validity of those results can be verified by describing the material and the analysis of the material thorough. This thorough analyzing keeps the case study valid and reliable. (Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka, 2006)

Triangulation is other aspect that brings validity to a research. The meaning of triangulation of material and method is that in the same research, more than one method can be combined. For example multiple sources of information such as interviews, observations and reports and both qualitative and quantitative methods can be used. (Willberg, Eeva, 2009).

4 BLOG MARKETING IN CASE OCEANHORN

4.1 Case company

Cornfox & Brothers Ltd is a small Finnish game company. The headquarter of Cornfox & Brothers Ltd. is located in Helsinki. The brothers of Cornfox & Brothers Ltd are Jukka and Antti Vlljanmaa and they work as Lead Programmers in the game Oceanhorn. They both have university doctorate diplomas and have worked before in games such as Star Wars: Force Unleashed (Mobile) and Blob Revolution (IOS).

Heikki Repo, the writer of the company's blog, works as a Lead Artist and Lead Game Designer in Oceanhorn. Repo has worked as a Lead Artist, Artist and Animator in multiple iOS and Mobile games such as SW: Force Unleashed (Mobile), Star Wars: Cantina and Blob Revolution.



Figure 3 Cornfox & Brothers Ltd's logo (Cornfox & Brothers Ltd, 2013)

The previous project of Cornfox & Brothers Ltd was Death Rally, an iOS game that was also updated to Android and PC versions. The game Death Rally has been downloaded more than 14 million times (Repo 2013).

4.2 Oceanhorn: Monster of the Uncharted Seas

Oceanhorn: Monster of the Uncharted Seas is an adventure game that honors the old console adventure games where the player explores the game world, solves puzzles and finds treasures from the ruins of old castles and temples.



Figure 4 Gameplay screenshot from Oceanhorn

Oceanhorn is an ancient sea monster that terrorizes the World of Uncharted Seas. The game puts the gamer in the role of the hero, and the aim is to slay this monster for good and to find out what happened to the hero's father. The game opens the gamer a world that can be explored by boat or by foot.



Figure 5 The game Oceanhorn's logo

In the end of December 2012, Cornfox & Brothers started co-operation with FDG entertainment, a German developer and publisher of highly creative download Games Company, in order to make Oceanhorn the best adventure game released in 2013.

The co-operation with FDG entertainment turned out to be fruitful, as with FDG's help, the legendary composers Nobuo Uematsu and Kenji Ito joined the process and composed music for Oceanhorn.

4.3 How the blog has been used as a marketing tool

Heikki Repo, the co-founder and Creative Director of Cornfox & Brothers Ltd., has been writing the blog about the game Oceanhorn since the beginning of the development process in November 2011. The blog can be found in www.oceanhorn.blogspot.fi. By starting the writing from the beginning of the process the readers and the fans have been able to follow the development of the game from the scratch.

4.3.1 Why a blog?

As Repo says, blog can be used as a marketing instrument many years before the actual product is ready and this is not possible with the traditional marketing tools. (Interview 14.10.2013)

Another reason why Repo decided to start writing a blog about the game was the fact that traditional marketing channels are too expensive for a small company. Because a blog is cheap and easy way to create an information channel for the followers, the decision to start a game development blog was made.

The aim for the blog was to create a channel where to collect material and to introduce the development of the game. The objective for the blog was also to gain visibility for the game among the readers and the game forums. According to Repo, a blog is also a personal way for marketing the game as it has its writer's voice.

4.3.2 Description of the blog

The blog about Oceanhorn is written in Blogger, one of the biggest sites for blogs. As Blogger is the first site designed for blogs, it is a reliable site and has established a wide user base. According to the statistics of BuildWith, there are over 2, 7 million websites using Blogger (BuildWith, 2013). After signing in to Blogger, it is possible to create a new blog.

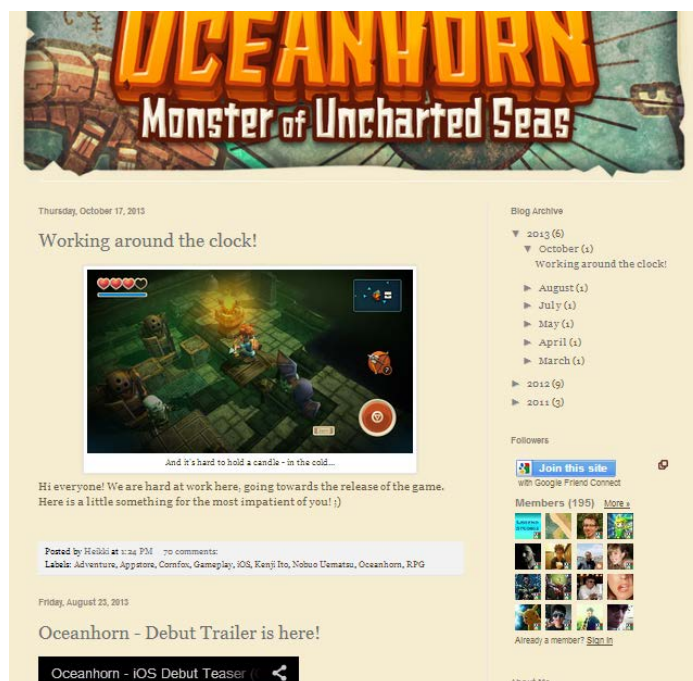


Figure 6 The structure of the blog

The blog posts are organized in chronological order so that the newest post is the first available in the site. As can be seen from the Figure 6 The structure of the blog, in the right side of the page the Blog Archive containing all the posts can be found. Under the Blog Archive is located the list of the followers of the blog. The writer's info can be found underneath the followers.

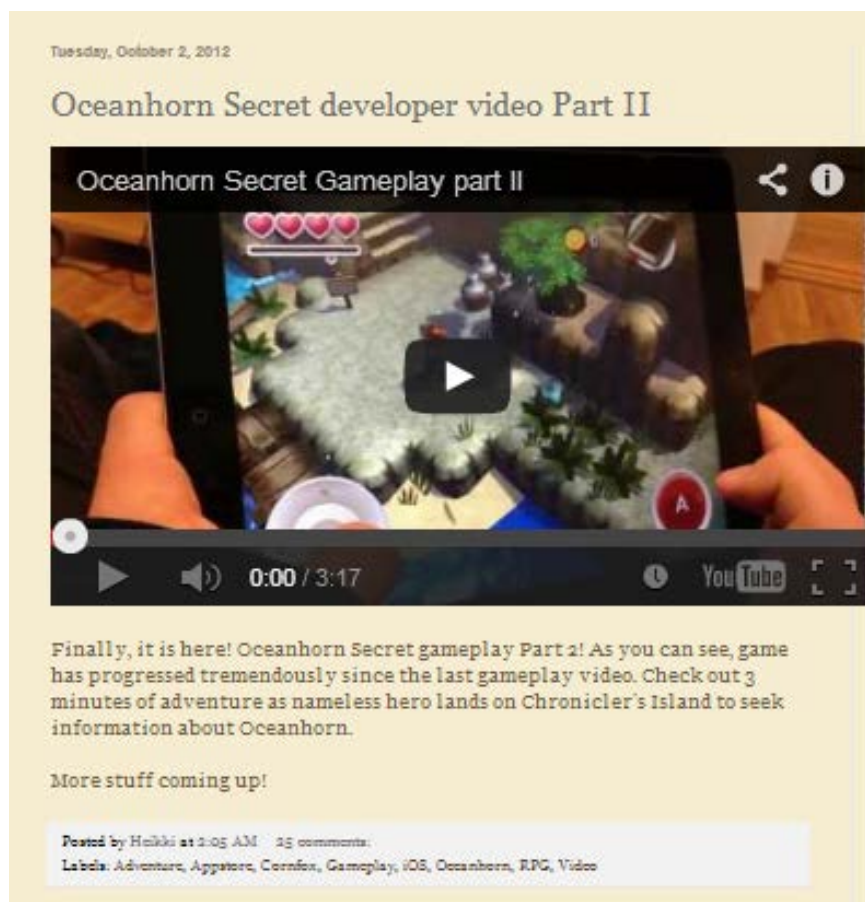


Figure 7 Structure of a post

The first information available in a post is the date of the post. Underneath the date, the title of the post is written. After the title, the main text, pictures and videos can be found. In the end of every post, the commenting area and the comments can be found as well as labels that the post covers. (Figure 7 Structure of a post).

According to Heikki Repo, the subjects of the blog posts were milestones of which he wanted to tell to the audience following the development (Interview 14.10.2013). The first milestone in the process was naturally the beginning of the process. In the first blog posts Repo writes about the game, thanks for the warm welcome and introduces the makers of the game.

As new matters in the development occur, there are blog posts written about them. For example when FDG entertainment joined to the process, a blog post was written:

Now, Cornfox & Brothers are happy to announce that as an outcome of fruitful negotiations, we have begun cooperation with FDG Entertainment to bring you the best adventure game of 2013.

The Oceanhorn news in other forums is also recognized in the blog, as there is for example a post about Oceanhorn being on a gaming site called Gametrailers.com:

Fantastic news came to our attention! Chris Buffa from Gametrailers featured Oceanhorn in Gametrailers' Side Mission article of "Most Anticipated iPhone and iPad Games".

In the blog, there are also several posts that contain videos. In the first two posts that included video, the clips were "secret" game play videos. In other posts, the videos are game play captures and trailer videos. After the release of the game, a Launch Trailer video containing the composer Nobuo Uematsu's greetings as added to a post. The videos from the blog are available in YouTube and the links to the videos can be found in the blog posts ¹.

¹ Oceanhorn Secret Gameplay part 1: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W4pW3o5HVHU>,
 Oceanhorn Secret Gameplay part 2: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sZo9NEmaBSY>,
 GDC 2013: Oceanhorn: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YI65D8fX2OU>,
 Oceanhorn: iOS Debut Teaser: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dNpwcXCCl8>,
 Oceanhorn Launch Trailer: Nobuo Uematsu speaks:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zJwSAru1ZyA>

The music of the game is also presented in two posts. In the other, the music composed by Kalle Ylitalo is presented and in the other, the co-operation with Nobuo Uematsu and Kenji Ito is introduced.

The game was accidentally released in March of 2013 and a blog post to explain the situation was written. In a blog, it is possible to react fast in order to maintain the company's good image. The post about the accidental release was posted in the same day as the accident happened so the readers and people who already bought the unfinished version knew how to act in order to get compensation immediately. This shows that a blog can reach the customer fast and reduce the damage that may have been caused from such incident.

The blog post about the release date is one of the most anticipated posts in the blog. When the release date was announced to be the 14th of November, a post about it was written. After the release and the good welcome a post about the great reviews was written. The post included a Launch Trailer video and a link to iTunes where the game can be purchased.

4.3.3 The audience of the blog

Heikki Repo stated in the interview that in his opinion, the readers of the blog are the people who are expecting for the release of the game, the fans. His hopes were that the readers would be the potential consumers and also other game developers. In the following analysis of the blogs audience, Repo's hope about the readers being potential consumers of the game is confirmed.

The information about the readers is from the control panel of the blog. In the control panel, the writer can follow and control the blog posts and comments, follow the statistics and modify the appearance of the blog and edit the overall settings.

The geographical distribution of the readers can be found from the statistics of the blog. The top 10 follower countries can be seen from the Figure 8 Pageviews by countries 2.11.2013:

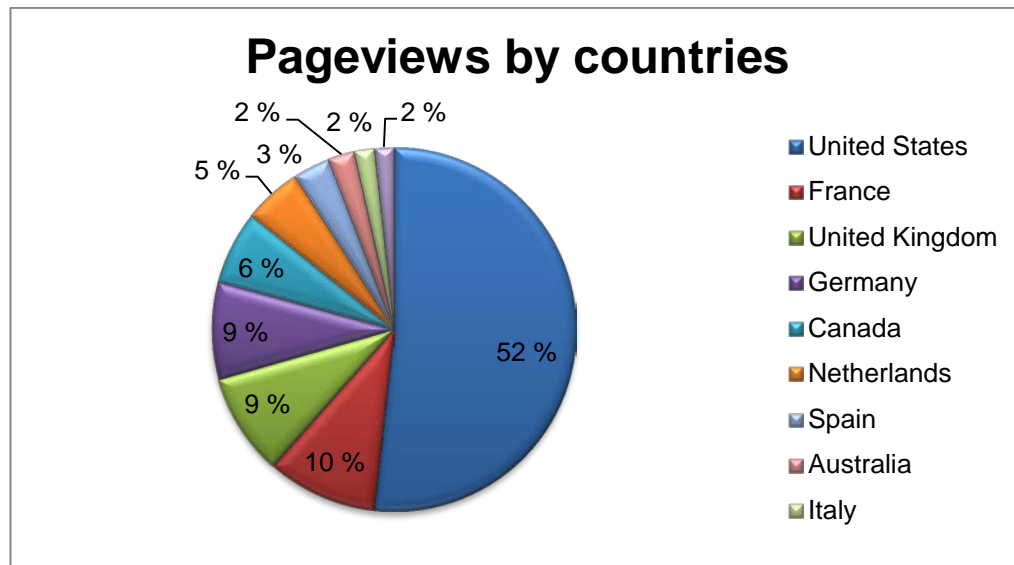


Figure 8 Pageviews by countries 2.11.2013

The majority of the readers of the blog, 52%, came from the United States. The 10 % of the readers came from France and United Kingdom and Germany covered both 9% of the readers. The surprising fact is that Finland covered only 2% of the readers even though the company is Finnish. This can be explained by the fact that the Finnish market for games is relatively small.

Another fact that can be seen from the statistics is the amount of pageviews by operating systems. As the game Oceanhorn is designed for iOS systems, the end user will be consumer using Apple's products.

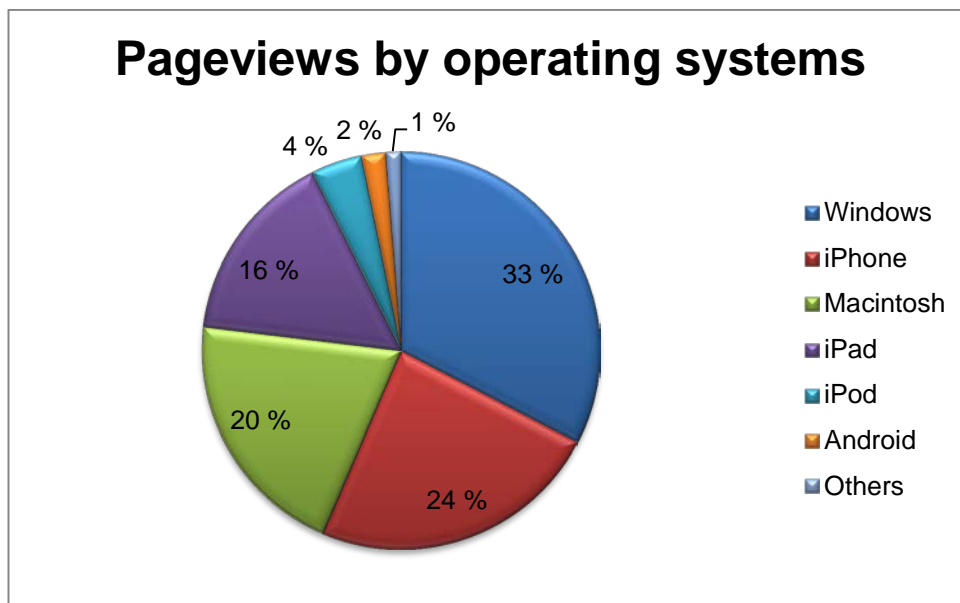


Figure 9 Pageviews by operating systems 2.11.2013

Even though the biggest individual operating system was Windows with 33% of the readers, the overall amount of readers using Apple's devices surpassed Windows with 64% of all readers.

The reader statistics also showed the pageviews by browser. Safari was the most common browser for the readers of the blog by 47% and when all browsers used in Apple's devices (Safari, CriOS and Mobile Safari) were summed up; the total percentage of the readers using those browsers was 52% as can be seen from Figure 10 Pageviews by Browser 2.11.2013.

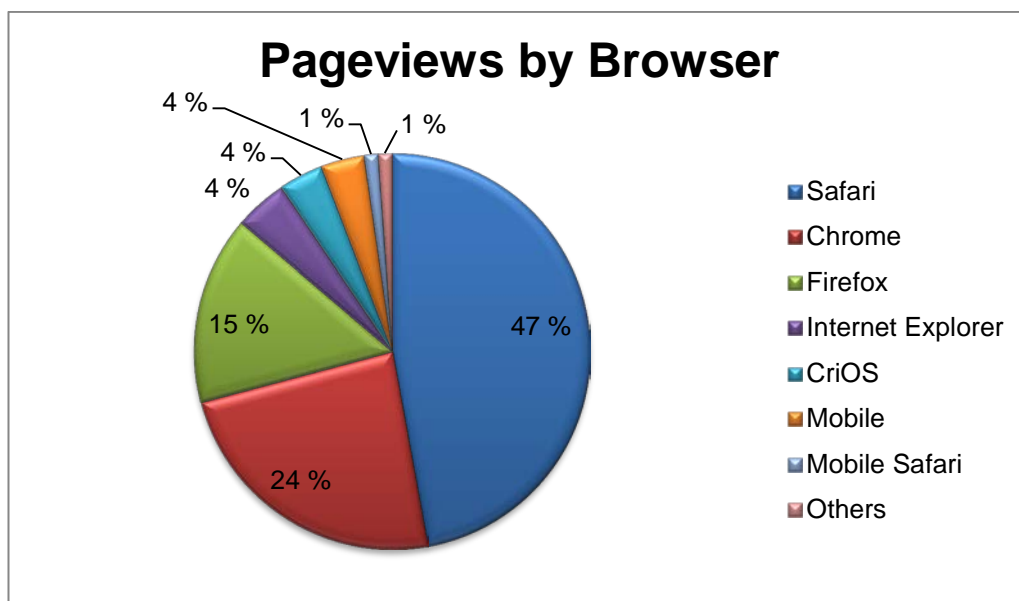


Figure 10 Pageviews by Browser 2.11.2013

This means that at least half of the readers of the blog were included to the target audience, users of iOS, who are the possible buyers of the game.

4.4 Analysis of the blog

4.4.1 The themes arisen in the discussion

The content analysis studies the themes that are arisen in the comments of the blog in order to understand the discussion the blog posts have created. Certain keywords were chosen and the frequency of those words is calculated with the search function of Microsoft Office Word.

In the content analysis about the comments of the blog, certain themes of discussion could be found. The information that the readers wanted most eagerly is the date of the release. Other themes arisen were the possibility of an Android version, the comparison to the Zelda games, the yearning for more updates and the praises for the game.

By analyzing the calculation of the frequency of the keywords in the comments, the date of the games release can be seen as the information most anxiously anticipated as the keyword “release” appears in the comments 63 times (Figure 11 Anticipation 7.11.2013). The keywords analyzed in this figure are as following:

- Release
- When
- Can't wait
- Date
- Release date

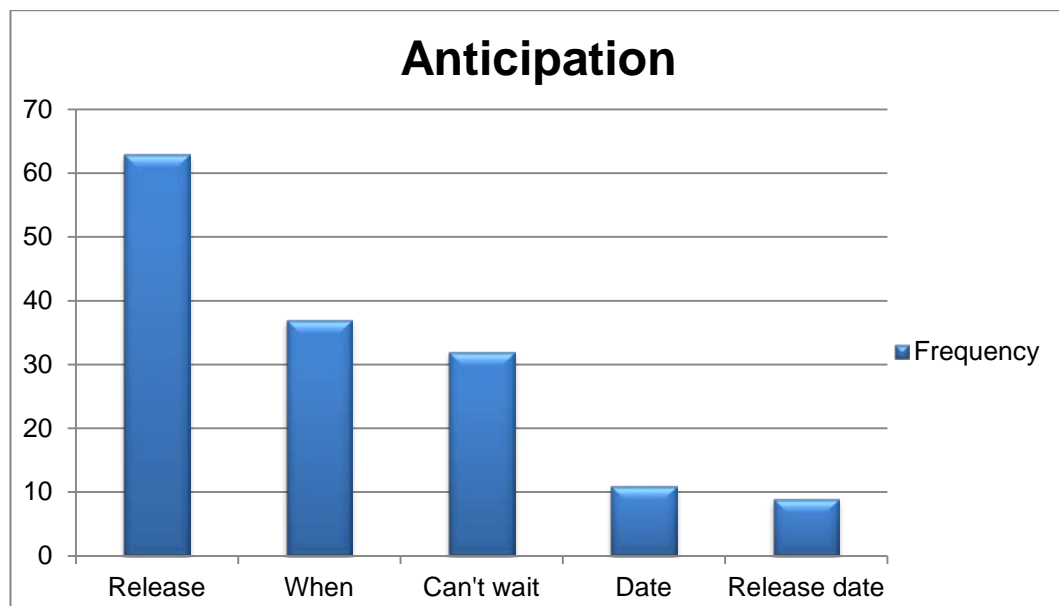


Figure 11 Anticipation 7.11.2013

It can be seen in the comments that people want to know the release date:

Bearsy October 8, 2013 at 12:52 PM

We want this beautiful game now! so c'mon i can't wait any longer...! :D

Other theme that came up in the comments is the possibility of an Android release:

Matt Harvs October 28, 2013 at 7:50 AM

This game is going to be amazing. I hope after the iOS release you will make an Android version with support for gamepads. This will looking amazing on my S4.

Pete1259 October 21, 2013 at 6:41 PM

Please make an Android version :(

Even though the writer has stated from the beginning that the game is made for iOS, the possibility of a new version for other platforms was often asked in the comments.

The comparison to the Zelda game Wind Waker often came up in the comments. A blog can easily be used as a reputation management tool and it is possible to react to the comments and the criticism fast. In order to comment to the Zelda comparison, Repo wrote about it on a post in January 30th, 2012:

“I find it kind of funny how Oceanhorn is constantly compared to Wind Waker. It's ok, but I would like to state that we are not making a copy of any existing game. Instead, we try to capture the feeling of our favourite console adventure / RPG games, where you can discover the world, find treasures and roam through lands and seas.”

Another theme arisen in the comments is the hunger for more updates. In this part of the content analysis, the keywords of which frequency is studied are:

- More
- Update
- News

- Info
- Progress

In many comments, the readers yearn for more information and more updates as can be seen from the Figure 12 More Updates 7.11.2013.

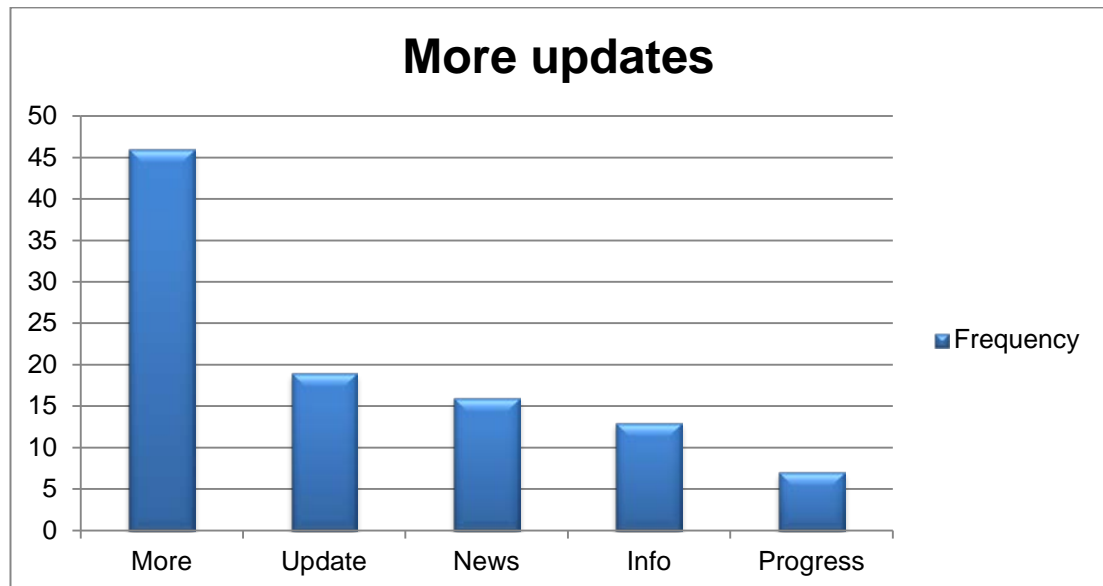


Figure 12 More updates 7.11.2013

The fact that the readers were eagerly waiting for new updates indicates that the blog is not updated as frequently as the readers would wish. Heikki Repo stated in the interview that even though the interest towards the blog is so high, he did not have enough time to update the blog as often as the readers would have wanted.

4.4.2 Interaction

Communication is the key to a successful customer relationship. When the company and the customers are interacting with each other in one way or another, in this case in a blog, the customers are more informed and this will lead to higher customer satisfaction.

A blog helps to humanize a company and this can also be seen in the comments that the blog posts get. As the interaction between the writer and the readers is quite personal, the tone of the discussion is mostly positive and the readers that comment to the posts are behaving well.

As the blog posts get tens of comments and questions and the time for the blog writing is limited, it is impossible to answer to all of the comments and as Repo said in the interview, the interesting comments and questions are answered.

The posts that include videos were also useful for the development of the game. When the readers interacted by commenting to the posts and pointing out some graphical flaws, the developers were able to improve the game. For example after the Debut Trailer video was announced, the readers noticed some problems and with the feedback improvements were made (Interview 14.10.2013). During the process the readers have also been giving ideas about the game, but these ideas were not taken into the game in order to avoid idea thefts.

After the release of the game the interaction has been even more active. The gamers are asking for advice to get further in the game, sharing experiences and congratulating and thanking for a good game.

Robert Pacurar November 18, 2013 at 1:45 AM

Congratulations guys ! Really amazing peace of art here, I feel like a kid again :)

The gamers have also informed about the bugs that they have spotted in the game. This way the readers of the blog can help the developers to improve the gaming experience:

didodido85 November 20, 2013 at 3:36 AM

Hello,

there's a bug on Withered Island into the gate on the watery area.

I've put the box before the stairs and now can't go to the reload button.

4.4.3 AIDA-model and the blog

The AIDA-model is a classic marketing model which aims to outline the promotional goals and achieving the final goal which is the customer's purchase of the good or service the company provides (Ferrle & Hartline, 2005, 258). AIDA stands for Attention, Interest, Desire and Action. When using these four stages it is possible to analyze if the market is ready to purchase the product or service.

The cognitive stage of AIDA aims to create awareness of the products for the potential customers. In the blog about the development of the game Oceanhorn, the attention the blog has drawn can be seen in the reader statistics. The all time page views of the blog is 327 648 (Table 1 Pageview statistic as of 2.11.2013). The blog has 207 members who follow the blog constantly in Blogger or other web services.

Table 1 Pageview statistics as of 2.11.2013

Pageviews	
Pageviews today	770
Pageviews yesterday	1 226
Pageviews last month	27 005
Pageviews all time history	327 648

The attention has also been drawn in the sites that refer to the blog as can be seen in the referring statistics. Google is the biggest site that draws traffic, fol-

lowed by gaming websites such as kotaku.com and toucharcade.com (Figure 13 Referring sites 2.11.2013).

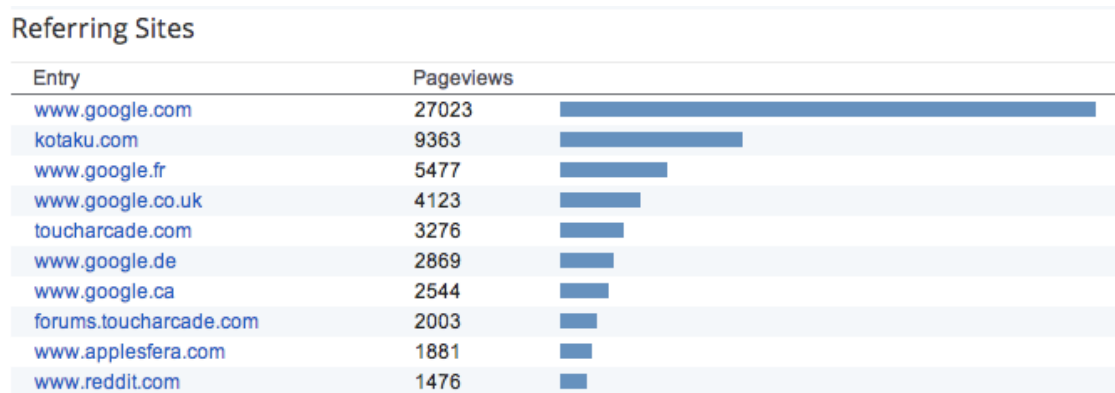


Figure 13 Referring sites 2.11.2013

In the affective stage of AIDA, the aim is to create, maintain and reinforce the customer's positive attitudes towards the company's products. In the blog, every blog post about the game Oceanhorn gave new information about the development of the game and this helped to maintain the interest of the readers. The blog readers were the first to know about the development and this maintained the positive attitude towards the game. In the blog there were also many videos about the game. The videos have been popular and one of the aspects that maintain the interest of the readers (Table 2 Video views as of 1.12.2013).

Table 2 Video views as of 1.12.2013

Video	Views
Oceanhorn Secret Gameplay part 1	89 262 views
Oceanhorn Secret Gameplay part 2	49 868 views
GDC 2013: Oceanhorn	53 162 views
Oceanhorn: iOS Debut Teaser	101 465 views
Oceanhorn Launch Trailer: Nobuo Uematsu speaks	27 111 views

In the affective stage, the aim is to create emotional actions. The desire towards the game Oceanhorn and the positive opinion about the game can be seen in the comments of the blog. The attitude towards the game is excited and most of the comments are positive and praising the game as can be seen in the content analysis (Figure 14 praises 7.11.2013). The keywords studied in the content analysis are:

- Great
- Can't wait
- Amazing
- Buy
- Looks great

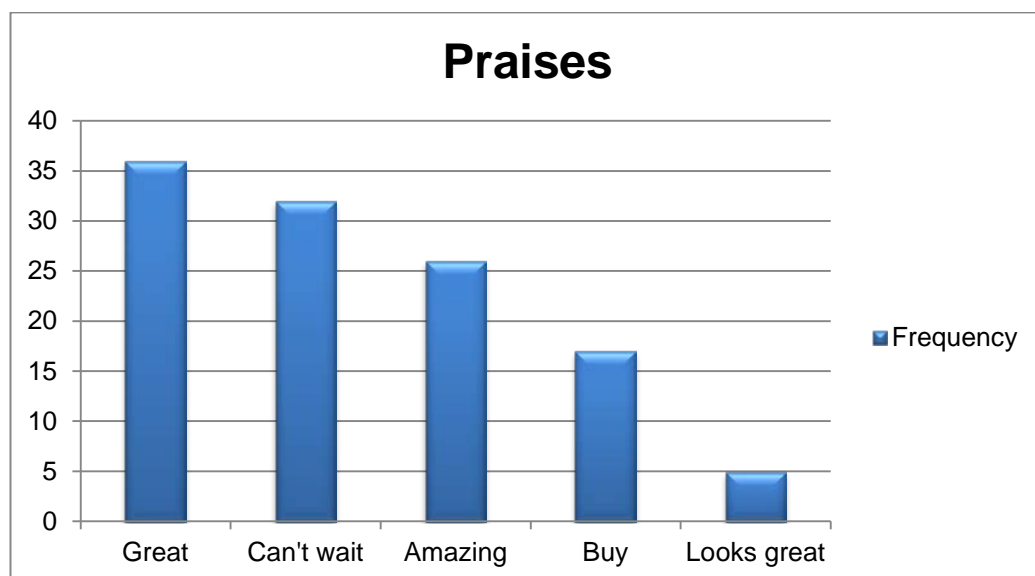


Figure 14 Praises 7.11.2013

At the behavior stage of AIDA, the action seeks to finish the customer's buying process and as can be seen from the content analysis, the readers of the blog were excited about the game and according to the comments and an assumption that the readers may buy the game can be made:

igor mamedes April 26, 2013 at 6:41 AM

SUPERB! I cant wait. Instabuy.

After the game was released, the comments of the blog showed that the followers have bought the game. The comments consisted of readers praising the game, giving tips to other gamers, asking for advice and pointing out bugs. This showed that the action towards the purchase has been made:

Sydre Dev November 16, 2013 at 12:16 PM

Just finished it, amazing game !

Replies

Eddy Zero November 16, 2013 at 11:22 PM

excuse me dude. where did you find the trencher boots for jumping? really appreciate your response.

Sydre Dev November 17, 2013 at 2:19 AM

You'll find them in the Frozen Palace at Gillfolk's Drop.

The release of the game also affected the amount of readers the blog has. As can be seen from Figure 15 Reader statistics 27.10-25.11.2013, the release date created a bounce in the reader amounts.

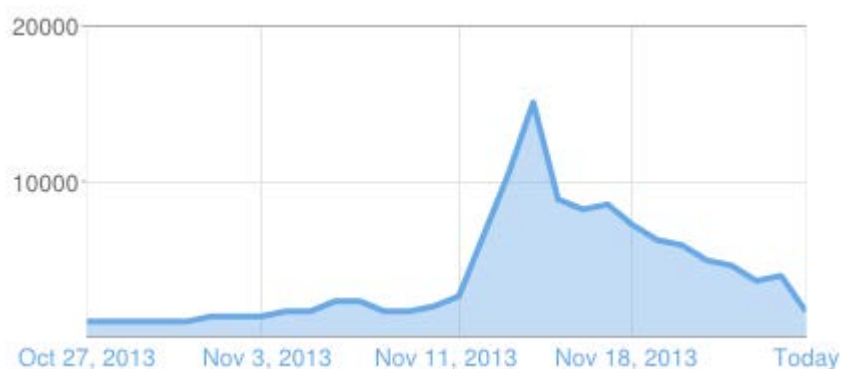


Figure 15 Reader statistics 27.10–25.11.2013

The increase of the readers around the release date of the game showed that there is interest towards the game and new readers may have found the blog

after searching for information about the game online. This shows that the interest towards the game was still high, even after the release. This shows that there is a market for the possible sequel for the game.

The people playing the game also used the blog as a discussion area about their problems with the game or their progress. This can be seen from the high number of readers also after the game was released. The comments also showed also that the customers were satisfied with the game and the fact that they purchased the product:

DenusDecember 2, 2013 at 5:21 AM

I just want to say thanks for this great game, and especially the fact that we don't have to buy gems, gold or other crap to be able to play!

Keep it that way!!

The exact number of sales was not available but it was seen in the game center, Apple's online multiplayer social gaming network, that in 9.12.2013, Oceanhorn had 357 247 players. Game center is available for users of Apple's products, after signing in with the game center account. This number was not totally accurate as all of the players may have not had game center account and with one account, more than one player can play the game but it still illustrates the popularity of the game. These numbers show that the game has been successful and that the action to buy the game has been made.

5 CONCLUSIONS

The objective of this thesis was to study the using of a blog as a marketing tool in case Oceanhorn. The objective was to answer the following research questions:

1. What is blog marketing?
2. How can a small business benefit from blog marketing?
3. How does blog marketing increase the awareness and visibility of Cornfox & Brothers' new game Oceanhorn?

As the first research question is answered in the theoretical part of this thesis, the case study emphasizes on answering the last two research questions.

5.1 Benefits of blog marketing for small businesses

A blog is a useful marketing tool for small companies because it's easy and fast. It is possible to write a blog among other tasks and it is an easy way to gain more visibility for a small company.

With a blog, a small company can communicate with its customers in real-time and react fast to comments and questions. This fast interaction may be crucial for small companies that do not want to lose any possible customers. With the comments and the feedback from the customers, it is possible for the company to improve its performance.

Compared to traditional marketing channels, a blog can be modified faster if needed. Compared to for example TV-commercials or newspaper add, in a blog it is possible to react fast if the information needs to be modified. This makes a blog a dynamic marketing tool and for small companies, this can be very important.

Using a blog as a marketing tool is cheap and this is a crucial point for many small companies. When there may not be lots of resources to put to marketing, a cheap tool as a blog is a great choice. The financial savings compared to traditional marketing tools is unquestionable.

By linking a blog to other blogs and sites, the visibility of the blog increases and this brings more visibility for the organization. The more linking a blog gets, the more visibility it gets. This brings more readers and more possible customers for the company.

5.2 Conclusions to case Oceanhorn

The blog was linked to Toucharcade and other gaming forums and this brought visibility to the game Oceanhorn. In these forums the discussion is even more active than in the blog and this shows that the game is getting more visibility among the readers. Heikki Repo, the writer of the blog about Oceanhorn is also active in other forums in order to increase the awareness and visibility of the game.

The blog also has an active follower base. There are more than 200 followers who follow the blog in Blogger or other blog sites. The blog has also been viewed more than 300 000 times (2.11.2013).

The blog has also reached its target customers. As Repo stated in the interview, the target audience for the blog are the possible buyers of the game. As the statistics showed, more than half of the readers are users of products using iOS, and as the game is designed for Apple's products, possible buyers. The content analysis of the comments also shows that the readers are the fans waiting for the game and buyers of the game.

The AIDA-model effectively described the effectiveness of blog marketing. The blog increased the awareness about the game and drew the reader's attention. The blog also helped to maintain the reader's interest towards the game as

there were details about the development of the game and other new information for the readers. Videos, pictures and information in the posts helped to maintain the interest of the reader. In a blog, it was easy to convince the reader that the game was good and that it would satisfy the reader's needs if it was purchased. As the reader's attention was achieved, the interest towards the game was aroused and the desire for the game was created, the blog may have been a big influencer for the buyer to take action and purchase the game. The action towards the buying can be seen from the number of players Apple's game center showed; in 9.12.2013 Oceanhorn had 357 247 players.

Repo also stated in the interview that he has been pleased that he decided to start to write a blog about the development of the game even though he has not had enough time to write as often as he and the readers would have hoped.

After the release of the game, the content of the discussion changed. People who bought the game were still praising and thanking for a good game and there are now people who are playing the game and for some reason are stuck and need advice. The discussion about the progression in the game is intense and people are advising each other in the comments.

5.3 Suggestions for future

If the blog is continued in the future, one important aspect to consider would be the frequency of the updates. When a blog is updated more frequently, the interest of the readers is more easily maintained. As could be seen from the content analysis of the comments, the readers would hope for more updates and the writer also recognized the fact that the blog is not updated as often as wished, so this could be a good thing to pay attention to. If there is enough information to update, a frequency of every two weeks or at least once a month could be useful for a game development blog.

One important thing would be to add the blog to Blogilista and international sites as well. This would create more traffic for the blog and increase the visibility of the blog. If the blog would be listed in these sites, the visibility in the blog-

osphere would increase and the amount of linking to other blogs would probably rise. As at the moment the blog about the game is not listed to Blogilista, this could be an easy action that can be made in order to create more visibility to the blog.

5.4 Credibility of the research findings

Case study research can be defined as a development of the detailed, intensive knowledge about a single case or multiple cases (Robson, 1993, 40). A case study does not aim to create generalizations but to increase knowledge of a certain case, in this research, the blog marketing of the game Oceanhorn. Even though case study does not aim to make generalizations, the results of case studies can still be useful for future researches.

Multiple sources of information such as interview, content analysis and statistics analysis of the control panel of the blog are used in this study. This brings triangulations to this research and that makes the research more reliable.

The using of content analysis creates systematical and categorized information. In this study, the material is relatively small, and due to this fact the analysis is mainly descriptive.

The connection with the research and the theory brings credibility for a research. In this thesis, the AIDA-model suited for the case study well and the model supported the analysis of the material and the results.

When a research is done meticulously, accurately and the results of the study can be repeated, meaning that anyone can get the same results when studying the same subject with same methods, the credibility of the research increases. If this research would be repeated, the same results would be found.

The factors mentioned above make this research valid and reliable.

5.5 Suggestions for further research

For this case specifically, one interesting topic to study further would be the themes of discussion in other forums, how these themes differ to the blog? In the blog, the discussion and the comments are mainly positive and the difference of the tone of the discussion in other forums could be interesting to study.

Another interesting topic to study could be on a larger scale. The fact that companies still use blog marketing relatively little in their marketing, only 12,6% of the top 500 companies in Finland in 2013 (Auramo, 2013), shows that companies have not yet realized the opportunities blog marketing can offer. The changes in the popularity of blog marketing in the coming months and years could be an interesting topic for further academic research.

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Appendix 1. Interview

1. Why did you decide to start writing a corporative blog?
2. How much time do you use to write your blog?
3. What kind of things do you write in your blog? Why?
4. Who do you think are your readers? Who would you want them to be?
5. How many readers do you have? (Statistics)
6. Is there an interaction between you and the readers?
7. What kind of comments/discussion is arisen to your blog posts?
8. What kinds of themes in the comments have you noticed?
9. How do you react to the comments?